

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
August 27, 2013 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office

Others present:

Carol A. Kerstetter, Sigma Theta Tau International-Xi Omega Chapter
Michael D. Hartman, dH Enterprises Inc.
Peter C. Eisenbrown, LTL Consultants Ltd.
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the August meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Burket moved to accept the August 27th agenda as presented. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the August agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

§303.a.1 review-proposed City Park monument to the nurses serving in the Fairgrounds Field Hospital, during the Civil War [0:00.31]

Ms. Kerstetter recalled her presentation to the Historical Architectural Review Board. She described her organization as a chapter of an international nursing honor society, forced to close when funding for a nursing program at Kutztown University ended about two years earlier. The group had planned to use their remaining funds toward a headstone for Mary Sassaman, a Civil War-era nurse buried anonymously at Charles Evans Cemetery until a veterans group donated a marker in 2012. With about \$1200 left, their attention turned toward memorialization of a field hospital that operated in City Park between 1862 and 1863. Mr. Miller reported that the Review Board had made a few suggestions on the design and its inscription, but otherwise deferred to the Planning Commission to recommend an appropriate location. Mr. Raffaelli asked about possible locations other than City Park/Penn's Common. Ms. Kerstetter referred to the hospital's location and the estimated 130 wounded from the Battle of Antietam that were treated there. She described their proposed marker as a small stone, 2 feet wide by 10 inches deep and 16 inches high. Mr. Bealer asked about other memorials Civil War existing in the Park. Mr. Lauter could only recall the 'first defenders' memorial to the Ringgold Light Artillery Battery, located along Perkiomen Avenue between monuments to William McKinley and Christopher Columbus. Mr. Bealer advised a placement that would be safe from a potential tripping hazard. Mr. Miller suggested passing the final determination to City Council and the Public Works Department. He said the Berks County Historical Society indicated the hospital was located in the vicinity of the present-day 'comfort station' just southwest of the intersection of Rose Garden Road and Washington Street. Ms. Kerstetter objected to locating it with that building. Mr. Miller noted other small yards and green spaces in that vicinity. Mr. Raffaelli objected to what he termed the "unabated, uncontrolled" proliferation of monuments throughout City Park. Mr. Lauter agreed in part, concerned with a cemetery-like atmosphere in a multi-use public space, but deemed that concern to be the primary motivation in the design of the Veterans Memorial Grove at the intersection of Constitution Boulevard and Hill Road. Mr. Miller suggested communicating the recurring concerns to City Council, with a recommendation that the Public Works Department determine an appropriate location, taking into account the actual location of the field hospital, and otherwise support the recommendations of the Review Board. Mr. Raffaelli suggested a historical marker, similar to those installed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, at or on the comfort station. He said he couldn't support any additional free-standing stone monuments.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend that City Council approve a placement on the comfort station, if amenable to the Public Works Department, or at an appropriate position within Veterans Memorial Grove. Mr. Lauter supported the latter direction, for the better organization. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted 2 to 1 in favor of that recommendation, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #25-2013

Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area – parking lot land development plan [0:18.22]

Mr. Hartman described the site, north of the restaurant, and its one-way access from South 9th Street through to Peach Street. He said the plan has been ‘in the works’ for a few years and recently reactivated. He knew he needed to submit to the Conservation District, for reconsideration of the since expired approval of the erosion and sedimentation controls. He said they’ve initiated a discussion with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation officials regarding the South 9th Street driveway. Mr. Miller noted the need to clarify the zoning status, especially verification of the Zoning Hearing Board’s conditions on the variances granted. He said there have been changes to other properties and parking lots involved in meeting the minimum off-street parking count. Mr. Hartman, only recently made the project manager, said he wanted to make an appearance for the Commission’s comments, realizing the issues required before approval. He said it was the same general design as that presented two years earlier. He intended to forward some additional explanation of the stormwater management to the Public Works Department. He acknowledged the faded memories involved, and intended to more-fully research the background.

Mr. Bealer moved to table the parking plan, on the recommendation of the Planning Office staff. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the Jet Set parking plan.

Student Lot F (Reading Area Community College) – parking lot land development plan [0:30.39]

Mr. Eisenbrown recalled the comments made on the initial submission, believing them to have been satisfactorily addressed. He said they had also since received the zoning permit. Offering to first answer any additional questions, he requested a final approval. Mr. Miller acknowledged the revisions made, and supported its approval. He confirmed that a short section of sidewalk requested by the Public Works Department and County Planning Commission had since been added. There was some discussion of the Community College’s (master plan) proposed changes to the campus traffic circulation, and potential ‘dedication’ issues in an eventual Front Street extension to Chestnut Street.

Mr. Lauter moved to grant final approval to the Community College’s parking plan. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the “Student Lot F” parking lot plan.

Resolution #26-2013

Other business:

§508.3 agreement to extension-New Wire Cleaning Line Building 154 (Carpenter) [0:39.34]

Mr. Miller reported that Carpenter was still waiting on an air-quality permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and requested an additional month under review.

Mr. Bealer moved to accept the extension to September 27, 2013, as requested in an August 23rd email from the applicant’s engineer. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to extend its review of Carpenter’s “Building 154” plan, per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code’s time limits (§508.3) for plan review.

Resolution #27-2013

review the draft July 23, 2013 meeting minutes [41.03]

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the July meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the July 23rd meeting minutes.

Resolution #28-2013

Mr. Miller mentioned the previously-approved land development plans ready for the Commission’s endorsement.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the August meeting. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the August 27th meeting. – 7:44p